

In stark contrast, H.R. 1563 would authorize the head of not only the I.R.S. but every federal agency to take so-called “adverse personnel actions” against one of its employees where the agency finds that an individual has willfully fallen behind on his or her taxes or failed to file a return on time. In order to defend yourself against such an adverse personnel action under H.R. 1563, you must demonstrate that your failure to pay your taxes or file a return on time stemmed from a “reasonable cause.”

In other words, this bill deputizes agency administrators, managers, and foremen as bonafide tax investigators—authorizing them to examine and determine the tax compliance status of agency employees. In addition, H.R. 1563 essentially requires all federal workers to affirmatively defend their failure to pay taxes or file a return on time by requiring them to provide agency management with specific and satisfactory reasons for their non-compliance. If you’re behind on your taxes because you went through a health care crisis and want to keep your federal job, you’re going to have to share the details of your medical emergency with your employing agency under this bill. If you’re behind on your taxes because you’re going through a divorce but still want to keep working at your federal agency, you’re going to have to disclose the facts surrounding your divorce to your federal manager.

Now, I understand that this bill may seek to address those rare instances where federal bad actors intentionally try to cheat on their taxes. In practice, however, H.R. 1563 will broadly diminish the tax privacy rights of all federal employees. That’s in spite of the 97% tax compliance rate for federal workers reported to our committee by the I.R.S. for 2014. It’s also in spite of the existing federal payment levy program that already allows the I.R.S. to levy federal salaries and wages in order to recover delinquent tax debts in a cost-effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, I don’t believe that the solution to achieving 100% tax compliance across the federal workforce is to waive the individual privacy rights of dedicated federal workers across the board. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to oppose this legislation.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Unfortunately, all that is in this bill is pure symbolism without any substance, and it is very, very sad. I am disappointed to say that the House majority seems more interested in ideology and political messaging rather than facts and evidence.

Here are the facts. There is no problem to solve. The IRS confirmed that they have no problem collecting delinquent taxes from Federal employees. Federal employees have a much higher tax compliance rate than the American public and even Members of Congress and their staffs.

CBO has estimated that implementation of this measure will actually increase the cost to American taxpayers.

I, again, ask the question: When somebody is fired and does not have a job, where does the money come from? The fact is that we already have mechanisms in place to get the money. I do believe with all my heart that this is

another effort to demonize our Federal employees, and it is very, very sad.

I urge all Members to vote against this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Here are the facts. I just love it when Washington, D.C., says, Oh, there is no problem. We have got a hundred thousand-plus people—Federal employees—who don’t pay about \$1.1 billion in taxes. That number is up from \$962 million in 2008.

The problem is getting worse, but there is one department, one agency, where it is getting better, where it did improve, and it was in the IRS. We should pat them on the back.

There is one fundamental thing that we changed. In a bill that was voted on and supported by Mr. CUMMINGS and Mr. HOYER and the 400-plus Members of this body, the Congress gave the ability and the authority to the head of the IRS to terminate the employment of one of their workers if they are not paying Federal taxes.

Guess what. Now, they have the best tax compliance rate in the Federal Government. Let’s give that same tool to the rest of the departments and agencies.

You know what is a slap in a face to the Federal worker? When you don’t get rid of the bad apples. When you have got somebody who is thumbing their nose, not playing by the rules, not doing what they are supposed to be doing. Guess what. It goes into the morale of the institution.

I think, as a Federal employee being paid by the taxpayers, one of your fundamental responsibilities is to file and pay your Federal taxes.

A fact: last year, we had 24,833 people who, as Federal employees, didn’t even file a return. Can we solve that? Absolutely, we can solve that. We should require it.

When somebody goes to fill out an application, they should certify that they are fully compliant with the taxes. If there is a hardship, if they are in dispute over taxes owed, if their spouse gets into problems, if they are having their wages garnished, there are all of these outs.

Even at the finish line, based on an amendment offered by Mr. LYNCH, which we accepted, you get another 180 days to then go forward to your administrator or whoever is leading your department and agency and say: I am valuable; I am trying.

Still, the leader can say: Oh, you know what? I am going to give you a waiver or allow you to continue.

If we don’t give them the authority—which they have at the IRS—then you limit the tools, and you are not getting rid of the people who are the bad apples.

We can make sure we get the best Federal employees but weed out the bad apples. I want to see people on both sides of the aisle say: let’s pat the back

of the overwhelming majority who are patriotic, hard-working, dedicated employees, but we are going to get rid of the bad apples.

That is what this bill does. I urge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1563, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

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HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

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RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess for a period of less than 15 minutes.

Accordingly (at 4 o’clock and 15 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia) at 4 o’clock and 29 minutes p.m.

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ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on the questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

Ordering the previous question on H. Res. 200; adopting H. Res. 200, if ordered; and suspending the rules and passing H.R. 1562 and H.R. 1563.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.